



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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FEDERAL WATERS OFF TEXAS CLOSE TO SHRIMPING ON MAY 15, 2002

NOAA Fisheries announces that Federal waters from 9 to 200 nautical miles off Texas will close to shrimp trawling at 30 minutes after official sunset on May 15, 2002, corresponding to the period that Texas closes its waters to shrimp trawling.

NOAA Fisheries considered a request by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) to suspend the Texas closure for the 2002 fishing year. The Council made this request to NOAA Fisheries after receiving public testimony from shrimp fishermen and processors indicating that the fishery was experiencing economic hardships because of unusually low shrimp prices. These industry participants commented that a suspension of the Texas closure would alleviate some economic problems in the shrimp fishery by providing continuous income to shrimp fishery participants.

In accordance with the provisions of the Fishery Management Plan for the Shrimp Fishery of the Gulf of Mexico, U.S. waters (FMP), the Southeast Regional Administrator (RA), may, after determining that benefits may be increased or adverse impacts be decreased, either: (1) modify the geographical scope of the extent of the Texas closure, or (2) eliminate the Texas closure for one season.

To make a determination regarding the potential for increased benefits with a suspension of the Texas closure, NOAA Fisheries conducted a Regulatory Impact Review (RIR). The RIR projected that, if the closure were suspended, the average producer surplus (total revenues minus variable costs) for smaller vessels would increase, but producer surplus for larger vessels (which are more likely to fish in Federal waters) would decrease. The RIR also concluded that,

for the fishery as a whole, total harvest (in pounds produced) and revenues over the entire fishing year would decline if the closure was suspended. Thus, NOAA Fisheries concluded that rather than alleviating adverse economic conditions in the fishery, suspending the closure was more likely to perpetuate and probably exacerbate current problems. This would not result in the greatest benefit to the nation. Therefore, NOAA Fisheries has decided to not suspend the Texas closure for the 2002 fishing year.

The Texas closure ranges from 45 to 90 days. The closing and/or opening date of the Texas closure are based on the results of biological sampling by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). NOAA Fisheries will reopen Federal waters off Texas when the state of Texas opens its territorial waters. Historically, the opening has been on or about July 15. If there is a need to adjust the July 15 date for the termination of the closure, NOAA Fisheries will announce the revised opening date.

Fishery violations may be reported during business hours (M-F 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.), to the Southeast Regional Office Law Enforcement Division at 727-570-5344, or after hours by calling the hotline at 1-800-853-1964.

To obtain considerable recorded information about our missions, services, and management measures, call our toll free public service line at 1-866-570-5301. If the information you need is not available, you can leave a message, and we will return your call. Information also is available on our homepage at <http://caldera.sero.nmfs.gov>. NOAA Fisheries is an agency of the Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.